

During my study of Indian poisonous snakes I examined six specimens (three adults and three juveniles) of *Naja hannah* preserved in the Zoological Survey of India. Three out of these, viz. one adult from Botanical Gardens, Calcutta (Regd. No. 8292) and two juveniles (locality unknown) have this scale.

It thus appears that this character is not so rare as suggested by Smith.

ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,

34, CHITTARANJAN AVENUE,

CALCUTTA 12,

March 9, 1964.

K. K. TIWARI

[Among the 14 specimens in the Society's collection two—No. 2275, Kachugaon, Dubri Div., Assam, and No. 2280, Quilon, Kerala—have the additional scale on the head. Both are adults.—EDS.]

12. OCCURRENCE OF THE OBLONG SUNFISH [*RANZANIA TRUNCATA* (RETZIUS)] IN BOMBAY WATERS¹

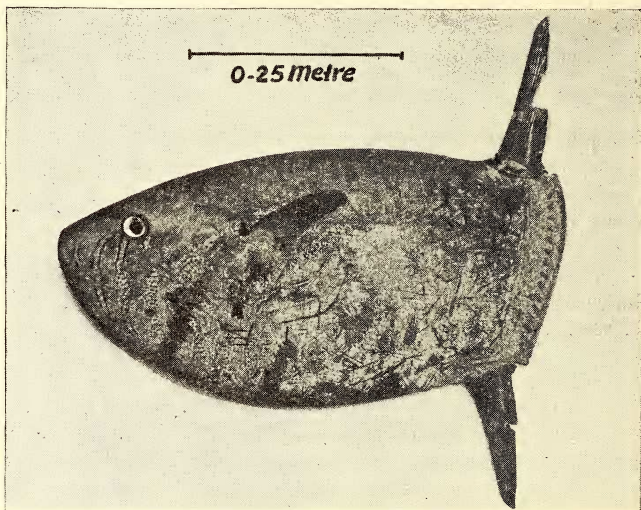
(With a photograph)

A specimen of the sunfish was caught on the hook by a fisherman at Sassoon Dock (Bombay City) in March 1964. Not having come across such a fish before, he kept it in ice overnight. The next day it was brought to the Taraporevala Aquarium where it was identified as the Oblong Sunfish, *Ranzania truncata* (Retzius).

The family Molidae is represented in the world by three genera—*Mola*, *Masturus*, and *Ranzania*. The first is represented by the Giant Ocean Sunfish *Mola mola* (Linnaeus) which grows to more than eight feet. The genus *Masturus* is represented by the Pointedtailed Sunfish *Masturus lanceolatus* (Lienard). This can be easily distinguished from *Mola mola* by the asymmetrical pointed tail and by the presence of a coloured band running between the dorsal and anal fins. *Ranzania* differs from these two genera in its longer body, its depth being contained twice in its length (as against 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ for the other genera), and also by its gill-rakers being free (not buried in the skin). The skin is smooth.

¹ Communicated by the Director of Fisheries, Maharashtra State.

Kulkarni (1953)¹ has reviewed the records of sunfishes in Indian waters. Although they are members of the off-shore tropical and temperate marine fauna of the world, they are never very common.



The Oblong Sunfish *Ranzania truncata* (Retzius)

Apart from three specimens recorded from Ceylon by Deraniyagala (1944) and one from the Malabar coast by Chacko & Mathew (1956), the Oblong Sunfish has not been caught in our waters. The capture of the present specimen has therefore provided an opportunity for examination in a comparatively fresh state. A short description of the fish is given below.

Ranzania truncata (Retzius)

Tetrodon truncatus Retzius, *Vet. Ak. Nya Handl.* 6 (2) : 116 (1785).

Balistes truncatus Pennant, *Outlines of the Globe* 1 : 213 (1798).

Orthogoriscus truncatus Pearson, *Spolia Zeylanica* 7 : 208 (1911).

Ranzania truncata Barnard, *Ann. S. Afr. Mus.* 21 (2) : 989 (1927) ; Barnard, *ibid.* 30 (5) : 657 (1935) ; Norman & Fraser, *Giant fishes, whales & dolphins* : 184 (1937) ; Chacko & Mathew, *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 53 (4) : 724 (1956) ; Nikol'skii, *Special Ichth.* (2nd Ed.) : 474 (1961).

¹ Kulkarni, C. V. (1953) : Rare Ocean Sun-Fish—*Masturus lanceolatus* Lienard in Bombay waters. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 51 : 948-50.

Ranzania laevis Whitley, *Rec. Austr. Mus.* **19** (1) : 108 (1933); Deraniyagala, *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* **44** (3) : 429 (1944); Munro, *Mar. & Freshwater Fishes of Ceylon* : 284 (1955).

Ranzania makua Jenkins, *Proc. Cal. Ac. Sci.* **2** (V) : 780 (1895); Jordan & Evermann, *Bull. U. S. Fish Comm.* **23** (1) : 440 (1905); Snyder, *Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus.* **44** : 455 (1913); Scott, *Marine & Freshw. Fishes of South Austr.* : 301 (1962).

Ranzania typus Fraser-Brunner, *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (2) **10** : 7 (1943); Smith, *Sea Fishes of South. Afr.* : 422 (1953).

The body is greatly compressed but elongate, the depth being contained twice within the length. The skin is smooth. The mouth is covered by flaps of skin on each side to form a funnel. The teeth are fused to form a plate in each jaw, the latter not extending beyond the rounded profile of the body. The gill-rakers are free. An air bladder is absent, and so are the pelvic fins. The skin below the elongate pectoral fins is depressed so that these fins lie flush against the body. Their axis lies above the level of the centre of the eye. The tail is geophyrocercal; its border is slightly undulating, giving it a scalloped appearance.

MEASUREMENTS

<i>Characters</i>		<i>Measurement in mm.</i>
Standard length	..	528
Total length	..	571
Depth of body	..	290
Length of snout (from front of orbit to mouth)	..	72
Transverse diameter of orbit	..	34
Longitudinal diameter of orbit	..	30
Interorbital width	..	64
Height of dorsal fin	..	180
Height of anal fin	..	170
Length of pectoral fin	..	119
Length of caudal fin	..	43
Height of caudal fin	..	220
Distance between tips of dorsal and anal fins	..	547

Weight 6.5 kilograms

Colour in the fresh fish dark steel-grey above, merging to silver on the sides and belly. This silvery sheen is easily rubbed off by handling, then exposing a fleshy pink with a honeycomb design of slightly darker red. On preservation, the body turns a uniformly dark grey. The sides of the head below the eyes have parallel silvery stripes with black borders, extending backward as gradually diminishing stripes on the belly.

The tail, which is pinkish brown, has approximately eighteen

finger-shaped dark spots at right angles to its border; these indicate the positions of the fin-rays below the skin.

The network of bright silver bands, with small black spots, enclosing oval patches of dull greyish silver, and irregular dark marks on the back and hind end of the body, described by Barnard (1927), are not indicated in the present specimen.

The specimen will be deposited in the collections of the Zoological Survey of India.

The author is grateful to Dr. C. V. Kulkarni, Director of Fisheries, Maharashtra State, and Dr. H. G. Kewalramani, Senior Scientific Officer, for facilities at the Taraporevala Marine Biological Station.

TARAPOREVALA MARINE BIOLOGICAL STATION,
BOMBAY 2,
July 27, 1964.

B. F. CHHAPGAR

13. A PRELIMINARY ACCOUNT OF THE FLATFISHES (HETEROSOMATA) FOUND ALONG THE BOMBAY COAST¹

The flatfishes (Heterosomata) are well represented in the catches along the Bombay coast and as many as fourteen species have so far been recorded in the samples of catches obtained during the years 1957-58 from Okha to Malvan. Out of these, the occurrence on this stretch of coast of three species, *Pseudorhombus elevatus* Ogilby, *Brachirus commersoni* (Lacépède), and *Paraplagusia blochii* (Bleeker), is being recorded here for the first time. A list of flatfishes of Bombay, with a brief account of the variations from previous descriptions with reference to the morphometric and meristic characters, is given below.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF FLATFISHES OF THE BOMBAY COAST

Family PSETTODIDAE

Psettodes erumei (Schneider) *Marathi*, Bhakas ; *English*, Indian Turbot
D. 47-54, A. 35-41.

Common in trawl catches throughout the year. In small numbers in the inshore waters from September to October.

Hab. East Africa to the Pacific.

¹ The area studied and reported on includes the coasts of Maharashtra and Gujarat States.